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# Women in Leadership: A Comparative Case Study on Successful Leadership

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# Women in Leadership:

## A Comparative Case Study on Successful Leadership

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## **1. Acknowledgments**

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## **2. Abstract**

The purpose of this report is to understand what makes a successful female leader. Since there are so few women in executive level positions, especially chief executive officer positions, I became interested in analyzing how successful leaders act in contrast with how unsuccessful leaders act. To analyze, I will focus on the leadership of two prominent businesswomen, one who has been successful in their tenure, and one who has been unsuccessful. Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors, Inc. has been successful throughout her tenure, while Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo has been unsuccessful in turning the company around. I will analyze the similarities and differences between these leaders. Factors that will be considered include education, leadership style, reactions during moments of controversy and/or crisis, and their response to difficult issues. I expect to find that the success, or failure, of these women is mainly due to their styles of leadership as well as their level of emotional intelligence and communication style. Mary Barra exhibited a transformational style of leadership during her tenure, while expressing a high level of emotional intelligence. Marissa Mayer failed to adapt to the organizational culture of Yahoo and exhibited a transactional style of leadership and low level of emotional intelligence. External factors are also considered.

### **3. Introduction**

#### *3.1 Problem Statement*

In a world that is made up of so many powerful women, why are there so few in leadership positions? The term glass ceiling refers to the fact that it is more difficult for women to advance in corporate America than it is for men. Women make up about half of the workforce, yet only a small fraction hold leadership positions in the Fortune 500 companies (Walker, 2015). There is no doubt that the statistics surrounding women in leadership have seen a positive change over recent years. In the graduating class of 2014 nationwide, women earned 57.1% of all bachelor's degrees, almost 60% of all master's degrees, and 51.1% of all doctorate degrees (NCPE, 2017). We see an increasing number of women obtaining high-level professional degrees, yet the percentage of women climbing the corporate ladder is not following the trend. On the 2015 Fortune 500 list, only 21 female CEO's were represented. This means that only 4.2% of women are leading the nation's largest corporations (Fortune, 2016). According to an analysis published by the *Journal of Applied Psychology* in 2015, women hold only 24% of senior vice presidents and only 19% of C-level executives (Sindell and Shamberger, 2016). C-level executives, also referred to as C-suite executives, are senior executives of a corporation. The slang term refers to the "C" in their titles, such as Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, etc. These are also any Presidents or Executive Directors of organizations. Studies have shown more often than not, women are put into executive level leadership positions during a time where a company is failing because hope is lost that the company will survive, and no male counterpart would want the position. There are surely times when a female CEO can turn the company around, and bring it back to success, and there are times when she fails, and the

company falls apart in her hands. What causes one woman to fail, while another woman with the same goal can succeed?

For my thesis, I am going to focus on two women who were appointed as CEO when the company was facing a crisis. Each crisis is unique to the respective company and CEO; however, each leader had to deal with employees, the media, and strategizing in order to maintain a successful organization. One of these CEO's was well received and successful in her tenure, and the other was not well received and was unsuccessful.

Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors, Inc., was able to successfully turn the company around. On the other hand, Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo was unable to turn the company around and saw a decrease in profits. I am going to look at the family and career background for both leaders, as well as analyze how they came to be appointed for the position, and how they handled the crisis and reacted in times of hardships and/or challenges. I will have a special focus on leadership style and emotional intelligence, taking notice of communication style during conflict. My hypothesis is that successful female leaders adopt a transformational leadership style and have a high level of emotional intelligence, as compared to unsuccessful leaders who will adopt more of a transactional style of leadership and have a lower level of emotional intelligence.

#### **4. Review of the Literature**

The article, *Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Women and Men*, analyzes transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles by looking at and comparing 45 previous studies. Author Alice H. Eagly explains that women are often put into the spotlight during their tenure as leaders due to the fact that they are so infrequently in such positions. The purpose of this research is to analyze women

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in leadership by looking at leadership styles to understand how women function as leaders, and how this differs from the way their male counterparts function in executive positions. External factors that could have a positive or negative effect on women's ability to successfully lead are also identified. Female leaders who overcame more barriers and/or older women who likely faced more prejudice are seen as more transformational. Eagly uses computer-based searches to find 45 appropriate studies. Each study is coded based on the publication year of the piece; the source of publication (journal article, book, dissertation, etc.), first author sex (male or female), percentage of men among the authors, title refers to sex or gender (yes or no) and more. Next, the author uses coding for the following leadership characteristics explained in the works, nationality, age, level of leadership, percentage of men in subordinate roles and participation in a training program among others.

On the transformational leadership scale, female leaders were seen to be more transformational and hold more charisma, while they also provided more, "inspired motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration" (Eagly et al, 2003).

The Genderlect theory, developed by Deborah Tannen, a Georgetown University linguistics professor, refers to the differences in conversational styles used by men and women. The theory suggests that these differences must be viewed as separate cultural dialects. Genderlect suggests that women desire connection and men desire power and status, causing the two to have differing views on how to handle certain situations. Tannen proposed that women practice rapport talk, the conversational style where one attempts to form connections with others during conversation. Report talk, a male conversational style, is where men attempt to gain power and attention, and win arguments through conversation. Tannen explains that many men see life as a contest, which we can see from the above theory when men use conversation to win



arguments. Because of this, men are more comfortable with conflict, and seem to embrace it, while women try to steer clear. *See Appendix A for Genderlect Theory chart.* I hope to use this theory to see how leaders respond to the challenges they face in executive level positions. From determining how the successful leader communicates, I hope to determine an ideal communication style for leaders.

The term “glass ceiling” refers to the challenges women face as they attempt to rise to senior level management positions. The term “glass cliff” refers to the challenges that these women face after they have reached the position of a senior executive. In her work, Meghna Sabharwal talks about the phenomenon and explains what influences it (Sabharwal, 2013). There are many factors that influence the glass cliff, and this study looks at the following: gendered institutions, influence of policy, empowerment, organizational equity, and work/life imbalance. This study looks at women in Senior Executive Service (SES) in United State Government agencies, and the challenges they have faced. The study looks through a social psychology lens to discuss how and when women are more likely to overcome the challenges faced. Using a Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, the findings of this study show that women in SES are more likely to overcome the challenges they face when they have direct control over the decisions being made, feel empowered, or experience equities within their organization (Sabharwal, 2013). Empowerment and organization equity are the two factors that I am most interested in, as I will be looking at leadership and communication styles across women leaders who have faced controversial challenges.

Sindell and Shamberger’s work, “Beyond Gender: Changing the Leadership Conversation,” talks about the benefits of having a female lead an organization, and the lack of action being done to put more women in places of leadership and seniority. A 2015 study shows

that 40% of Americans believe that there is a double standard when it comes to women looking for C-level positions. According to a study in Gallup's 2015 State Of The American Manager Report, "both male and female employees with women leaders reported higher engagement than those working for male bosses" (Sindell and Shamberger, 2016). The study talks about the benefits of having a female leader. In addition to higher engagement, female leaders are more trusted than their male counterparts and are seen as being more honest in business. Positive leadership qualities like the ones listed, positively impact business operations and lead to success. Instead of hiring more women with these qualities to take over as leaders, employers decided to train men to adopt these effective leadership skills. This, of course, was not helpful for women. Sindell and Shamberger recognize that there are unrealistic expectations when it comes to women in leadership. Women are not viewed on the same scale as their male counterparts, but are viewed under a different light, being more conscious of their mistakes and shortcomings. This work suggests that although some traits such as listening is seen as a feminine trait, it has both "masculine and feminine expression (Sindell and Shamberger, 2016). Even masculine traits have feminine expression. This work will be helpful for me in my attempt to analyze communication style in the context of masculine versus feminine.

Mayer et al's, *Emotional Intelligence as a Standard Intelligence*, explain that Emotional Intelligence (EI) is broken up into two main subsets – personal competence and social competence. EI is the ability to explain, understand, monitor, and control one's own emotions, as well as the ability to understand and monitor the emotions of others. Emotional intelligence is being able to analyze emotions in other people's face, remembering previous instances of emotions and feelings, and being able to analyze an emotion in parts, or in whole (Mayer et al, 234). Emotional intelligence is all about relationships – forming and maintaining relationships is

a significant part of being a leader. Business leaders, especially new CEO's, need to build relationships with their employees, so that they are trusted when going about an organizational change in the company. Leaders who are in the spotlight need to maintain relationships with the media so that their voices are heard in an honest fashion in order to be portrayed fairly.

### **5. Research Questions**

#### *5.1 Research Aim*

During my research, I hope to critically analyze female leaders. I will look at one female leader who has been successful in turning her business around, and I will also look at one female leader who has not. After analyzing the differences between my successful and unsuccessful leaders, I hope to ultimately answer the question: What makes a female leader successful? Each question will be answered for each leader in the form of a case study analysis on her leadership style, emotional intelligence, and communication during conflict throughout her tenure.

#### *5.2 Research Questions*

- What was this leaders family background?
- What is her educational background? Where did this female CEO get her highest degree, and what level is that degree?
- What was a difficult situation she dealt with in regard to her company? How did she handle the situation?
- Did she have a high or low level of emotional intelligence during her interactions with others throughout conflict?
- According to the Genderlect theory of communication, what was her communication style during this crisis?
- What can this tell us about her leadership capabilities? What is her leadership style?

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- What are some of the external factors that could have contributed to her failure during her tenure? *For this question I will look at the state of the company before she was appointed as CEO, as well as what analysts believed would be the outcome of her tenure. Looking at communication style here will help me determine a successful style of communication for the conclusion of this work.*
- What does this leader's view on relationships say about her leadership style? *In order to answer this question, I will look at relationships with employees and her reaction to questions during interviews that may indicate leadership style.*
- How (if so) did she fail?
- What do these leaders have in common? What, in conclusion, makes a female leader successful?

### 5.3 Assumptions

My assumption is that successful female leaders have a transformational leadership style. Transformational leaders bring about a positive change to their organization during their tenure as leader. This positive change can range from creating a campaign towards corporate social responsibility, becoming committed to being an equal opportunity employer, or bringing their company back from turmoil and debt.

## 6. Empirical Approach

### 6.1 Subjectivity Statement

As a young woman interested in business, and optimistic about my future leadership opportunities, I cannot help but think of the glass ceiling as I near closer to graduation, and start applying for full time positions. I am educated and intelligent, but as statistics show, I am set up for failure among my male peers as I enter corporate America. I am a student studying

management with a concentration in leadership and organizational change and a minor in communication. I have a particular interest in leadership styles, and analyzing what constitutes effective leadership. It is not a complex fact that all leaders have different styles, and effective leaders know how to adapt their styles to be effective in various difficult situations. As a result of studying communication and interpersonal relationships, I have developed an interest in discourse, and the difference in communication styles between men and women. I strive to succeed and am infuriated by the fact that I need to wish for equal pay in 2017. Change can only be enacted through the motivation and determination to make change for *yourself*, and that is what I hope to do through educating myself and others. I hope that through my research, I can bring to light what makes an effective leader.

### *6.2 Choosing Data Points*

I have chosen two female CEOs to research in my case study, one female executive who has been successful during her tenure as CEO, and one who has failed. Mary Barra, the chief executive officer of General Motors (GM) has successfully led GM through a major recall and more. She is the successful leader studied for this project. Marissa Mayer is being critically analyzed for her failures at Yahoo. I have made the age requirement of my study 40 years old. Choosing leaders who are over the age of 40 ensures that each woman is familiar with working and leading in corporate America, and experienced a considerable amount of the challenges women face day to day working in a corporate position. I chose Barra and Mayer because they are CEOs of companies that are well known to the average person. After doing a Google search of their names, I have determined that these leaders are well known. Both executives have hundreds of thousands of results populate after their name, company, and the term “CEO” was searched. This proves each leader’s prominence in the media and society today. Both GM and

Yahoo are based in the United State. Both Mary Barra and Marissa Mayer are on Forbes's 2016 list of The World's 100 Most Powerful Women. Barra is number 5, while Mayer is number 55 on the list (McNamara and Howard, 2016). I chose these companies because they are prominent in society which will ensure that these women are in the media, face significant challenges, and act as a general representation of what it means to be a female leader in a predominately male position.

### **7. Methods**

The results of this research have been found through a qualitative research process. I have conducted a comparative case study between Mary Barra and Marissa Mayer for the reason listed in the above section, Choosing Data Points. I have collected my data through a combination of news sources, archived scholarly articles obtained through my university's library, and through listening to videos of interviews, speeches, and quotes presented by these leaders. The combination of reading news articles and listening to the leaders speaking firsthand, will help better analyze how each handled herself, and how each was received by the media and the public.

### **8. Results**

#### *8.1 Mary Barra, CEO, General Motors*

Mary Barra was born in 1961, making her 56 years old. She grew up in Michigan with her parents and brother. Her father was a factory working at General Motors (GM) under their Pontiac brand, and her mother was a housewife (Sara, 2017). Barra's brother, Paul Makela is a renowned doctor.

She graduated from General Motors Institute, now Kettering University, for electrical engineering in 1985. While she was a student there, she was able to intern for GM. She obtained

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her Masters in Business Administration in 1990 after receiving a fellowship from the company. Barra stayed with the company moving from intern, to General Director of Internal Communications, to various Vice President positions. From 2011-2013, she was Senior Vice President of Global Product Development. During her time in this position, Barra introduced the Chevrolet Colorado pick-up truck (Crosby, 52).

Barra worked in facilities management for the company for years, but always had a strong desire to work more with cars, and be less involved with the manufacturing plants and facilities. Always one to stick up for herself, Barra had a conversation with her boss that she later described as “frank” (Crosby, 52). In Laura Colby’s, “Road to Power” Barra explains, “It was great that I had a frank conversation with my manager... but I didn’t get what I wanted right away... You’ve got to do a good job at the job you have” (Crosby, 52). Barra knew that no job was below her, and in order to make it to the top, where she so clearly wanted to be, she would have to prove her worth at the bottom and with determination and hard work, she would soon be working with the cars from the top.

Barra was finally appointed as CEO in December of 2013, and took the position a month later. She quickly got to work outlining a plan in March of 2014 to address the recalls that were recently found in GM products. Barra has stayed with the company through her entire career, and truly worked her way up from the very bottom. Her goals as CEO were to focus on creating great cars and trucks, something that GM has shifted from doing over the years following up to her appointment as CEO. Barra hoped to bring integrity back into GM’s mission while incorporating new technologies such as electric cars and self-driving vehicles into the GM line-up. Her main focus was the customer, and after the 10-year recall that she was called to clean up, she really had some work to do.

It is clear that Barra does not stress the fact that she is a woman in a prominently male position. She is a woman in a male dominated industry, yet she does not stress that during any of her public appearances. Barra explains, “I never said, ‘that happened to me because I’m a woman” (Crosby, 53). It could be said that much of Barra’s experiences come from working in this industry, so she has grown to learn how to succeed in a male-dominant career. However, during her career, Barra learned that she needed to play down her gender, and ignoring it proved to be successful, as many women of that generation had learned as well (Crosby, 53).

Barra became CEO of GM in the midst of an enormous recall that killed 32 people and injured several more (Isidore, 2014). This happened to be the deadliest recall in the history of automaker companies (Isidore, 2014). The recall of 2005 was put off for 10 years, after GM made the decision not to fix the defective part. The Chevy Cobalt, a sedan made by the company, had a faulty ignition switch. The 57-cent cost of fixing and replacing the part, according to GM, was not worth it as there was no “acceptable business case” (CNN, 2014). The case was brought to the media’s attention shortly after Barra took the role as CEO. Barra was put under scrutiny for the incident, and she was called to testify before members of Congress during the investigation. Barra seemed sincere in her apology, and reiterated that “today’s GM” would do a better job at focusing on safety and customer satisfaction rather than just saving money and earning profits (Isidore and Lobosco, 2014). In an effort to reorganize the company and prevent any secrets, lies, and/or recalls from happening in the future, Barra laid off 15 workers (Wallace, 2014). Barra promised Congress that the way the recall was handled was not acceptable and unlike how she would run business in the future. She described the situation as “disturbing” and said that GM had a legal obligation to families of the victims. It is unknown whether or not Barra knew about the recall during her tenure as vice president and chose to keep quiet, or whether she



had been left in the dark. Senator Claire McCaskill explained during Barra's hearing, "I think you've handled this with courage and conviction" (Crosby, 54).

It is clear that in GM's time of trial, Barra did not step down. Barra optimistically described the situation as, "[a] great disappointment, but also great progress" (Vlasic, 2015). Immediately after acknowledging and attempting to fix the issues at hand with GM, Barra started to come up with plans of new GM strategy to prevent future tragedies. Now, instead of strategizing to compete with other companies, Barra says GM is "going into it to win" (Vlasic, 2015). Barra's style of leadership in this situation is clearly transformational. Transformational leaders are those who transform their organization in a positive way. Barra brought humility and a sense of integrity to the GM name right from the start of her tenure as CEO through responding honestly and proactively during the GM recall.

Throughout her tenure, Barra displayed an extremely high level of emotional intelligence. Rather than leading from the shadows and ignoring the messages around her, she was seen giving interviews, testifying, and never failed to form relationships with anyone who crossed her path. Barra knew the harm that the recall had caused, and was able to sense the emotions of others and the public's uncertainty with GM. Barra, during an interview, was asked how she climbed up the corporate ladder at GM, from starting as an intern at the age of 18, to becoming the CEO. She responded, "it's all about the people" (Barra, 2016). Barra has been very socially aware of her relationships with co-workers and employees throughout her time at GM. She has displayed a high level of emotional intelligence by being able to understand GM's organizational culture and how to maintain and strengthen relationships along the way. She has clearly been well received by employee and stakeholders since she has never been demoted, and has been a part of the organization ever since stepping foot onto GM campus as a college graduate.

Mary Barra's communication style is feminine in terms of forming relationships and speaking in order to form relationships. She made it clear during interviews that building relationships was the most important thing. Barra explains in an interview with TODAY that, "it's all about people" (Barra, 2016). Barra was asked what she attributed to her succeeding at GM since she was an intern at 18 until she became CEO of the company. Nurturing these relationships with employees and making it a priority to be well received both displays a feminine style of communication and rapport talk as well as a high level of emotional intelligence. Barra displayed a masculine style of conversation in terms of dealing with conflict throughout the entirety of the GM recall. Barra faced the media and the lawsuit with honesty, transparency, and a firm plan to overcome the adversity that the company was facing. Barra took control of the issues, and faced them head on. The Genderlect theory suggests that women generally tend to steer clear of conflict. It is clear that Barra acted in the opposite manner in her response to the crisis. Barra's communication style is arguably the perfect combination of feminine and masculine tendencies. Being able to develop and foster successful relationships but handle conflict in a strong and proactive way makes a successful leader.

### *8.2 Marissa Mayer, CEO, Yahoo*

Born in 1974, Marissa Mayer is now 41 years old. She grew up in Wisconsin, where she was born, with an engineer father, and an art teacher mother. Mayer has a brother, Mason. Mayer's grandmother was a mayor for over 30 years (Sara, 2017). Mayer had a typical "small town" childhood and was active in ballet and piano lessons. Growing up, she loved math and science. It seems that from a very young age, Mayer took the lead role in activities. In high school, she was president of the Spanish club, captain of the debate team, and captain of the pom-pom squad

(Sara, 2017). Mayer got married to an investor and lawyer in 2009, and they currently have three children.

Mayer always thought that she would be a doctor since she always excelled in biology, chemistry, and had a love for numbers, however, after attending Stanford, her dreams changed. Mayer fell in love with computer science, which she decided to study, and later teach, symbolic system. Mayer went on to get her Master's degree from Stanford as well (Forbes, 2017). Upon graduation, Mayer had 14 job offers waiting for her. Among the offers were invitations of employment at Oracle, Toyota and Google. Google, at the time was just a small start-up, and although she did not have much faith that they would survive and become successful, she took a job there (Sellers, 2012). Mayer was Google's 20<sup>th</sup> employee, and started as a software engineer (Shontell, 2012). In her early role, Mayer helped design Google's homepage. Google, then, was just a small start-up. She stayed with the company for 13 years as it grew and became a public company. Before moving to Yahoo, Mayer was the Vice President of Local, Maps, and Location Services.

Mayer became the youngest CEO, male or female, of a Fortune 500 company when she became the CEO of Yahoo in 2012. She was a new mother and just 37 years old. Mayer was brought in to turn the company around – one Yahoo manager explained; “the company had spread itself too thin” (Sellers, 2012). Mayer developed a plan to turn the company around. Her plan involved several small efforts to increase productivity, which were categorized into three main points: “streamlining process, reducing bureaucracy, and removing jams” (Sellers, 2012). At the very beginning of her tenure, Mayer explained that she wanted to make Yahoo “the absolute best place to work (Sellers, 2012).

One major change Mayer made early in her tenure was to ban telecommuting across the organization. Yahoo had many employees working from home before Mayer became CEO, and she demanded that they all return to Yahoo offices to work. This was not well received by her employees, as many saw it as a benefit to work from home. It seemed that Mayer was blaming these telecommuters for Yahoo's failure and insinuating the company would return to success once these employees returned to work and focused more on their jobs. Although Yahoo's stock price increased from \$15 to about \$45 a share under Mayer, controversy in the media prevented Mayer from being labeled successful. In 2016, Yahoo was involved in what was labeled as, "one of the largest cybersecurity breaches ever" (Fiegerman, 2016). Hackers stole about 500 million accounts, supposedly for government use. As a result of the media's negative response, many companies attempted to acquire Yahoo.

An undisclosed potential buyer explained their attempt to contact Marissa Mayer with a proposal to buy Yahoo. The potential buyer could have been a company like Google, Verizon, Bing, or another large company that had the means to offer Mayer a fair price. However, Mayer would never return their phone calls. Mayer was not confronting the conflict and failed to recognize that Yahoo was failing or entertain a possible solution to Yahoo's decreasing profits. This method of communication is explained as a feminine style of communication in terms of dealing with conflict, according to the Genderlect theory.

Another example of how Mayer avoided conflict during her tenure comes from an interview that she participated in at Stanford. She was asked a question about her response to the negative media articles written about her. Mayer responded, "I don't read it" (Mayer, 2017). A large part of emotional intelligence is being able to manage the emotions of others. Mayer, by not reading the articles written about her, does not fully understand how she is being perceived by the public.

Again, this shows a low level of emotional intelligence. In addition to her low level of emotional intelligence, Mayer is steering clear of her problems, by not caring how the public and her employees perceive her. Steering clear of conflict is a feminine style of dealing with conflict, according to the Genderlect theory. It seems that Mayer is masculine in the way that she communicates and presents herself, but is feminine in the way that she deals with conflict – which may be her downfall.

### **9. Discussion**

There are several possible reasons to explain why Marissa Mayer was not a successful CEO during her tenure at Yahoo. First, Yahoo was a company that needed to be turned around. It was said by many to be a “sinking ship” and “suicide mission” (Swartz and Snider, 2016). Yahoo was losing revenue in the recent years leading up to Marissa’s Mayer run at CEO. Companies like Google and Facebook were becoming more popular, and it was thought that regardless of the CEO put into place, Yahoo would not survive.

Mayer was not well received by her employees. One potential reason why Mayer was not well received by her employees and others is because of her masculine style of communication in terms of building relationships and the “how and why” of the Genderlect theory. According to the theory, Mayer practiced report talk, which is attributed to males more often than not. Mayer was focused on her status and the objective tasks at hand within the organization, rather than fostering relationships with her employees and focusing on the culture of the Yahoo organization. As a result, Mayer was seen as aggressive. It is expected for men to act objectively and to be firm in their nature, but it not expected when a female does the same. It is not to say that the masculine style of communication is the unsuccessful trait, but rather that a female is the one portraying a masculine, and stern style of communication. I believe that if a man were to

portray themselves in the same way as Mayer portrays herself, it would be seen as normal, and be more respected.

It is clear that Mary Barra had a much more professional image than Marissa Mayer. Barra was on the cover of TIME, Forbes, and Bloomberg Businessweek magazines, posing on the cover for all wearing a professional solid suit. *See Appendix B for magazine cover photos.* On the other hand, Marissa Mayer posed for the cover of Vogue magazine, in a sleeveless business dress, with no suit jacket. The photo chosen for the cover features Mayer lying backwards on a white leather lounge chair wearing bright red lipstick with her hair down. Mayer was also on the cover of Fortune magazine, however, wearing a business style dress. Although this is a more professional photo, Mayer is rarely seen wearing a full pant suits, whereas Mary Barra is always photographed wearing a conservative business formal outfit. This Vogue photoshoot reveals how Mayer's personal image is very important to her. Rather than portraying herself as a conservative business woman, she seems to care more about her fashion and self-image.

Marissa Mayer became CEO in July of 2012 and has a baby at the end of September of the same year. She returned to work within a few weeks of giving birth. The unsuccessful nature of her tenure may be due to the fact that she was distracted in the beginning since she had a young family at home.

## **10. Conclusion**

### *10.1 Limitations*

Limitations throughout this research include time constraints. This research has been conducted over two semesters, equivalent to nine months. There is extensive research on the subject of female leadership, but with the constraints of time, not all of the research was taken into consideration for this project. I was also not able to look at all female leaders for every

Fortune 500 Company, and am not able to make generalizations based on the research that I have found. Instead, I have found female CEO's of two prominent companies (*see Data Points*). All of these CEO's have faced challenges, but only two of them have overcome these challenges to remain successful leaders. I cannot make generalizations about what constitutes a successful female leader solely by looking at two successful female leaders, and two unsuccessful ones.

### *10.2 Final Thoughts*

Mary Barra and Marissa Mayer had two distinctly different goals when they both became CEO. Mayer was tasked with bringing back a failing organization, while Barra was to lead GM through a recall and reshape the car industry in order to stay at the top. Because of this, is not safe to say that Marissa Mayer is an unsuccessful leader, because as mentioned before, Yahoo may have been doomed from the start. It is safe, however, to conclude that transformational leadership and a high level of emotional intelligence are associated with successful leadership. If the constraints of time were not an issue, adding more leaders would surely improve this study. I would have looked at several different leaders, both male and female, from different industries and different companies. Leadership styles vary across industry and vary on the situation at hand, as we have seen through Barra and Mayer. Being able to analyze the leadership of several leaders in several different situations would help show common themes across leadership, such as which leadership style and communication styles are commonly used among the top leaders of our nation's largest corporations.

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## 12. Appendix

### Appendix A

Genderlect Theory		
	Women	Men
How?	Rapport talk	Report talk
Why?	Connection	Status
Conflict?	Steer clear	Embrace

Source: Data retrieved from Tannen, D. (1990). You just don't understand. New York: Ballantine.

## Appendix B

Image 1



Image 2



**Image 1:** Bomey, Nathan. "GM CEO Mary Barra Lands on Time Magazine Cover." USA Today. Gannett Satellite Information Network, 25 Sept. 2014. Web. 12 May 2017.

**Image 2:** "World's Most Powerful Women." Forbes. Ed. Alix McNamara and Caroline Howard. Forbes Magazine, 6 June 2016. Web. 09 May 2017

**Image 3:**



**Image 4:**



**Image 3:** Higgins, Tim, and Bryant Urstadt. "Exclusive: The Inside Story of GM's Comeback and Mary Barra's Rise." Bloomberg.com. Bloomberg Businessweek, 12 Dec. 2013. Web. 12 May 2017.

**Image 4:** Bruce, Chris. "GM's Mary Barra Nets Cover of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People [w/video]." Autoblog. Autoblog, 28 Apr. 2014. Web. 12 May 2017.

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**Image 1:**

Weisberg, Jacob, and Mikael Jansson. "Yahoo's Marissa Mayer: Hail to the Chief." *Vogue*. *Vogue*, 01 Feb. 2017. Web. 12 May 2017.



**Image 2:**

CafeMom. "Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer's 'Fortune' Cover Is a Big Diss to Motherhood (PHOTO)." *CafeMom*. *CafeMom*, 2 Oct. 2012. Web. 12 May 2017.